

From the President

Spring is in the air! As the emphasis at the park gradually changes from winter activities and our ever popular warming hut to spring school group tours and the many excellent interpretive programs Calaveras Big Trees has become known for, we have been made aware that the State financial situation will have an impact on park functions this year.

With cutbacks in staffing funds it is up to CBTA to step in with additional support to assure the continuation of quality programs throughout the summer months.

Because 2007 was an unusually profitable year, particularly in Visitor Center sales, we are in a position to do this. We are pleased that this year's visitors will continue to enjoy the many and varied programs the park has to offer. If you have been contemplating getting more involved in these activities, now is the time to do it. There are programs to fit each volunteer's skills and interests.

The latest word out of Sacramento is that our new interpretive center is still a "go". Finishing touches are being made to the drawings and we expect the bidding process to take place this spring. Of course, as I've said before, we will keep you posted. It does look promising.

Enjoy this beautiful season of renewal and inspiration at the park.

Anne Saunders

Email Big Trees Bulletin

Now that we are firmly into the 21st Century, for those of you who would like the Bulletin delivered by e-mail rather than as a printed copy, please contact Lisa Shinn at the Visitor Center either by email at cbtvc@goldrush.com or by phone at 795-3840. This will save on paper and postage but for the many of you who like to sit and read your printed copy there is no guilt in continuing to receive it by mail.

Bruce Thomsen

Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting and potluck picnic will take place on Saturday, June 21, at 11:00 am in the picnic area behind Jack Knight Hall. CBTA members are urged to attend and participate in the election of the 2008 Board of Directors. Anyone interested in running for office may contact Lisa Shinn at 795-3840. Come and meet our student intern, staff members and new volunteers. It is a perfect way to start our busy summer season.

Garden Concert

The beautiful gardens of Tom Cahill in Blue Lake Springs, Arnold, will provide the setting for a summer music and wine extravaganza. Anne Saunders and friends will perform favorites, old and new, as well as familiar classical selections. The date is Saturday, July 12, at 4:30 pm. All proceeds will benefit CBTA's sponsorship of park programs.

Mark your calendars!

Calendar of coming events:

April 19 – 11:00 AM – Welcome Back
Brunch, Jack Knight Hall

April 26 – 10:00 AM – Seminar, Fishing in
the Sierra, Jack Knight Hall

May 3 - 10:00 AM – Seminar, Sequoia
National Park, Jack Knight Hall

June 21 - 11:00 AM – Annual Meeting &
Picnic, Group Picnic Area

July 12 -4:30 PM – Concert by
Anne Saunders

August 16 - Family Day

2007....What a Year!!!!

We've been busy in the Visitor Center!! We increased our visitation by 8,536 people from last year and the average spent per visitor increased by 25 cents. Our sales increased by \$43,728.74 from last year to bring our total gross sales to \$215,050.64. This was accomplished because of our beautiful location and our wonderful volunteers and staff.

For the last two years our top five selling items have been Kids' Educational Toys, Earrings, Men's Short Sleeve Shirts, Trail Guides and Hand Puppets.

The Visitor Center will be opening daily by the time you receive this. Hours are 11 am – 3 pm. Stop in and see some of the new items we are carrying this year.

Calaveras Big Trees State Park was presented the award for Best Campgrounds 2007 by the readers of the Calaveras Enterprise. So come and see what our visitors rave about, and experience one of your best camping trips ever.

Tami Rakstad-Schaner and Lisa Shinn

The Warming Hut

Built in 2003, the Warming Hut has become a welcome respite for visitors playing in the snow and snowshoeing or skiing in the park. Thanks to the efforts of Mike Brown, who coordinates the schedule, the warming hut is open and staffed by volunteers throughout the winter and into the spring on weekends and holidays. Hot chocolate and cider are provided by CBTA for free to all visitors who may sit and enjoy the fire in the center of the building. Also thanks to the hard work of Ranger Jeff Davis and the other rangers and maintenance staff, plenty of firewood is available and the sidewalks around the building are kept clear.

Some of you may remember the original hut located in the North Grove Campground on the other side of the meadow from the snow hill. That building, which was completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1937, was removed in the 1970s. The current hut was designed after the 1937 building using the original plans and funded by the Department of Parks and Recreation Volunteer Enhancement Program.

The hut will remain open as long as there is snow or until the weather warms. So the next time you are in the park stop by for a hot drink and enjoy the warmth of great company and a blazing fire. Bruce Thomsen

In Memoriam

John Hunt

Curt Kraft

Thomas LeClercq

Sixth Annual Welcome Docent Brunch

It is time for our annual brunch in the Jack Knight Memorial Hall on April 19th, 2008, at 11 am. CBTA will provide a delicious brunch for all the new members, new docents and returning docents. At this time you will have the opportunity to meet the rangers, Park staff, CBTA Board members and staff, new members and old friends. Also you will be able to find out about and sign up for all the programs that will be going on in the Park this year.

Please RSVP to me at 209-795-4305 Hope to see you all there.

Bunny Firebaugh

CBTA Seminars 2008

Saturday, April 26, Pete Ottesen, long-time outdoors writer for the San Joaquin (Stockton) Record will talk about fish and fishing in the central Sierra. River fishing, lake fishing and fish biology will be addressed. Pete enjoys sharing his wide variety of experiences in nature from Alaska to Africa as well as closer to home with his readers. He has also been a staunch supporter of Calaveras Big Trees State Park and for years coordinated the Outdoor Education Program of the San Joaquin County Office of Education.

Saturday, May 3, Lee Terkelsen will show his video on that famous park to the south, Sequoia National Park. Lee is a recently retired teacher who has produced several videos and DVDs which present such topics as the John Muir Trail and Wildflowers. Today's video illustrates his trip from west to east across the Sierra. On his trip he visits the General Sherman Tree and the Giant Forest and then continues on a 75 mile hike on the High Sierra Trail to Mt. Whitney. Lee is a board member of the Sequoia Natural History Association and recently produced the DVD *Wildflowers of the Central Sierra Foothills*.

Our Fall CBTA Seminars will be Saturday, September 27, when Dr. Tom Hofstra of Columbia College will present "All About Lichens," and Saturday, October 4, when Bruce Castle of Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch will present his program "Our Disappearing Forest". You will receive more information about these programs in the Summer Bulletin.

All programs begin at 10 am in Jack Knight Hall at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. All interested persons are invited to attend these programs. There only fee is the park day use fee.

Steve Stocking

Family Day Update

Mark your calendars for August 16th, 2008! Many of our regular educational presenters will return with their wonderful enthusiasm and expertise. There will be some new interpretive presentations, too, but more on that in the Summer Bulletin. Here is the line up so far:

Jim Mori with Butterflies
Rich Jones with Birds of prey
Mike Sutton with Reptiles
Denise Combs and Mike O'Neil with Stargazers
George Cook with Calaveras Fly Fishers
Fred Velasquez and Arvada Fisher with Miwok demonstrations
Mark Dyken with Story Telling
The Great Mother Lode Brass and Reed Band
Peppermint Creek Carriage Rides
The Arts of Bear Valley
Smokey the Bear
Katie Delgado with Face Painting

Cocked Hat Bowling
Nature Crafts

Plus, of course, barbecue lunches and ice cream. Sadly, Susan Ralya and Bruce Thomsen will not be doing the lunches this year. I need a super volunteer to take on this huge job.

Family Day is a day that we give back to our community. It takes many talented, friendly and skillful docents and staff to pull this event off. Every year I am astounded at the amazing cooperative energy that you all bring to this day. Thank you. I look forward to another fun and educational Family Day.

Please call me if you have any questions or wish to sign up to volunteer in the many different areas. Remember if you have your heart on working with the snakes, it's first come first serve. There will be signup sheets at the Visitor Center. Jane Henning Childress 754-1149 home, or 795-7980 work.

A Murder of Crows By Verna R. Johnston

Nearly everybody knows the crow – a large all-black bird that can make a lot of noise, not appreciated when it wakes you from a sound sleep at dawn. But when the noises that crows make are studied and analyzed they reveal a communication system that is one of the marvels of the animal kingdom.

Crows have more than thirty distinct types of calls which they combine in various ways to make many more. They use specific calls for predators like the great horned owl, mates, family members, food discoveries, dangers, territorial defense. Each call can be varied endlessly in pitch, volume, intensity, vibrato and duration to express subtle differences in the caller's mood. Calls also convey individual and group identity and are accompanied by body talk that clearly denotes fear, aggression and need in a very human-like way. Their calls run the gamut of screams, rattles, whines, coos, clucks, croaks and caws and more caws, but again of infinite variety.

Crows do not sing to attract mates as songbirds do. Family groups and pairs flock together in large numbers, giving potential mates a chance to find one another. They court at close range, making soft sounds, bowing and exchanging mutual caresses. Mating is for life, usually fifteen to twenty five years, and during that life they show an intelligence rare in the bird world.

There are about thirty three kinds of crows spread around the world and wherever they live they seem to solve problems and "figure things out"; with some making and using tools. American crows fashion splinters to skewer insects in crevices. They drop walnuts onto the pavement to crack them and let cars smash them. They drop them from one height for hard Black walnuts and from a lower height for thinner shelled English walnuts. They have been photographed placing nuts in front of parked car tires and dropping clams onto rocks on the beach.

New Caledonian crows – in addition to using twigs, splinters and leaf stems to extract spiders and insect larvae from hiding places – bend straight wires into hooks to lift things.

On the local scene, two of us watched a crow approach a bird bath which was nearly empty and turn its beak sideways to get at the tiny bit of water still left. The usual front bill dip would have yielded nothing.

Charles Weaver was tossing peanuts in the air to a group of crow and gulls at Pebble Beach recently. The gulls were faster fliers and caught the peanuts every time. Then the crows moved to a higher perch to get a faster takeoff and earned their share of the handout. The smartness of the crow is acknowledged in the legends of native American tribes. Some have crows creating the world!

Crows and humans have an affinity with one another. We are a steady food source for them and they are of interest to us. From bird-headed man on the walls of the caves of Lascaux, France, 30,000 years ago, through John James Audubon's stylized works and Robert Bateman's realistic current paintings, crows have been a part of our art scene.

Probably the most famous crow painting is the centerpiece of the Seattle Art Museum's Asian collection. Done in black ink on a gold background spanning a pair of paneled screens, it depicts a "murder" of crows, more than ninety of them in all forms of behavior. This impressive work of art was completed in the seventeenth century during the Edo period in Japan, by an unknown painter

Unknown child painters all over the country will be mingling rich black crows with skeletons and bright orange pumpkins as Halloween brings the brisk nights of autumn.

New CBTA Members

Mary Lu & Bob Burchard, Kerry & Lynn Curtis, Sanders & Pat LaMont, Chuck & Carole Stumpf, Gary & Marilyn Lewis, Roy & Beatrice Slice, Fredene Bradley, Suzanne & David Kuehl, Maryanne & Doug McAbee, Janice Bailey

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We're on the web: www.bigtrees.org

Our Mission : To assist and support the interpretation and environmental education programs at Calaveras Big Trees State Park

Calaveras Big Trees Association
Membership/Renewal Form
PO Box 1196, Arnold, CA 95223-1196 • 209-795-3840

Name _____
Address* _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____
E-mail _____
Name of referring CBTA member _____

Please circle choice below and make payment to:
Calaveras Big Trees Association (CBTA)
PO Box 1196, Arnold, CA 95223-1196

Individual	\$15
Family	25
Organization/Business	100

*Please advise of any change of address

Big Tree Bulletin

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2007-08 CBTA Officers/Board

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Firewood: Dick Watson
IC Project Manager: Rich Szukalski
The Board meets monthly the last Wednesday at 1 PM.

The CBTA dues year is the calendar year (Life Members excepted). Expiration date appears on your mailing label.